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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study documented the variance of five different school districts and one consortium as they implemented Local Professional Development Committees (LPDCs). Two of the sites were pilot districts in the state of Ohio, which mandated that districts/consortiums create LPDCs effective in September 1998. The six different cases are presented and analyzed to reveal the most glaring differences in the approach to LPDCs. The districts varied in several ways, but the most notable were with respect to funding, remuneration for committee members, and the awarding of professional development units. Recommendations are made for incorporating more follow-up and reflection into teachers' plans. The information gained from this study should be useful to any districts that are trying to answer the question, "What is quality professional development?" An appendix contains the interview protocol. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

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Responding to State Mandates: A Case Study of the Implementation of Local Professional Development Committees

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Abstract

This qualitative study documented the variance of five different school districts and one consortium as they implemented Local Professional Development Committees (LPDCs). Two of the sites were pilot districts in the state of Ohio which mandated that districts/consortiums create LPDCs, effective in September of 1998. The six different cases are presented and analyzed to reveal the most glaring differences in the approaches to LPDCs. The districts varied in several ways but the most glaring ways were in respect to funding, remuneration for committee members, and how the awarding of professional development units. Recommendations were made for incorporating more follow-up and reflection into teachers' plans. The information gained from this study should be useful to any districts that are trying to answer the question "What is quality professional development?"

Responding to State Mandates: A Case Study of the Implementation of Local Professional Development Committees

Accountability . . . Follow-up . . . Long-range Planning . . . Intuitively and experientially, we know that these are very critical ingredients for effective professional development. We've known this for a fairly long time (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Guskey & Sparks, 1991; Hirsh & Ponder, 1991; Lieberman, 1995), yet strides have not been made toward making effective and long-lasting professional development a reality. In the state of Ohio, however Senate Bill 230, passed in 1996, authorized the establishment of Local Professional Development Committees (LPDCs) with this very goal in mind: effective professional development. The foci of the LPDCs are twofold: one, the responsibility for renewing certificates and licenses that now more directly connect to professional development to the renewal of licenses/certificates has shifted from the state to local school districts and agencies; two, a structure is now in place which should provide educators with "the freedom to shape their own professional development" (Ohio Department of Education, 1998).

The purpose of our research is to determine how six different school districts implemented these Local Professional Development Committees that were to be set in place in the Fall of 1998. The main question guiding our study is: How do school districts vary in their establishment of LPDCs? A description of the six sites that were examined will be included in the methodology section. In the rest of this section, we will provide a brief review of the literature to provide some contextual information to our research question.

In a 1996 report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's

Future, entitled *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission, 1996), a strong argument is presented for revolutionizing the professional development of teachers, as we now know it. The report's main message, also called turning points, is that reform and renewal will only be successful when knowledgeable, committed, compensated, and well-prepared teachers have access to professional development that recognizes their need for the aforementioned attributes. Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Association, points out that while the National Commission identified standards for student learning and teaching, the Commission failed to include standards for professional development itself. Such standards are needed, Sparks claims, to "provide a benchmark for accomplished practice that can guide the professional development and school improvement process" (1998, p. 51). Sparks maintains that these standards should produce the type of result we are all after: "higher levels of learning for all students" (p. 51). Thus, for effective professional development to occur, three areas must be addressed: the context – organizational support; the process - how the learning will take place; and the content of the professional development.

Many researchers and theorists have echoed the cry for more authentic opportunities for teachers' professional development. Ann Lieberman notes, "What everyone appears to want for students - a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems . . . is for some reason denied to teachers when they are the learners" (1995, p. 591). Professional development is becoming synonymous with reflectivity. Linda Darling-Hammond and Milbry McLaughlin state "professional development today means providing occasions for teachers to reflect critically . . . and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs" (1995, p. 597). This new look at professional

development is thought to be crucial to reform and renewal in two ways: one, it views the teacher more significantly as a learner; and two, teachers' learning is viewed as a career-long process (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, p. 601).

The State of Ohio Reacts

With the passage of Senate Bill 230 in 1996, the Ohio Department of Education set forth a basic strategy for school districts to assume responsibility for the professional development of their teachers. Under the guidance of the Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC), teachers must now submit Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP) in order to retain their teaching licenses. The main responsibility of the LPDC is to review and approve the IPDP. Traditionally, professional development has been viewed as university course work and workshops. In this newer version, job-imbedded activities such as mentoring and supervising student teachers are viewed as professional development; educators are encouraged to "connect their learning to the contexts of their teaching" (ODE, p. 5). Therefore, a secondary Biology teacher who is seeking renewal will not receive credit for taking a class on the uses of math manipulatives for primary children. One of the main reasons the LPDC should reject this example is that it would not fit into the goal of improving students' learning in the teacher's certificated area, Secondary Biology.

In defining the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP), the main charge of the LPDC is that it must "ensure that the identified goals and strategies are relevant to the needs of the district, the school, the students, and the educator" (ODE, 1998, p. 18). The IPDP stipulates the type of professional development an educator will engage in for five years in order to renew the teaching license. The main requirements match the ODE previous requirements of six semester hours of college coursework or 18 Continuing

Education Units (CEUs), where one CEU is equal to ten contact hours; thus .1 CEU would be gained from a one hour workshop. Similarly, a one semester credit hour course at the college would be worth three CEUs. Educators have the option, then, of mixing college course work with CEUs to fulfill requirements for their IPDP. A very long and comprehensive list of options are suggested in the ODE's resource guide and ranges from: curricular projects; action research, mentoring, partnerships, presenting at workshops; applying for National Board Certification, and externships (ODE, 1998, p. 18). As educators design their IPDP, they are encouraged to consider how the goals can be supported by data, balance professional and personal goals, reflect current research, and they should consider how the goals reflect the district's and/or school's strategic initiatives such as, in Ohio, Continuous Improvement Plans.

Methodology

The use of interviews and written documents (Patton,1990) as reliable sources of data collection served as the methodology for this study. The data collection began when, during the spring of 1999, we contacted six sites and requested their LPDC document. We compared and contrasted the six different documents by looking primarily at the mission statements, the IPDP forms, the policies regarding appeals and reciprocity, and the committee structures. After this analysis, we developed our interview protocol, which consisted of twelve main questions (see appendix). During the summer of 1999, we interviewed a key informant from each site, an individual who had been part of the past process of creating the LPDCs and who was still involved in the process of approving and rejecting IPDPs.

Six individual case studies and a cross-case analysis of the six districts were completed as a result of the interviews and document review. Participants were given the opportunity to review their case study to ensure accuracy of transcription and to assist in member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Sensitizing concepts have been regarded by researchers as being useful for providing a focus to guide qualitative methods (Blumer, 1979; Denzin, 1989; Patton, 1990). In this study, our knowledge of relevant research and our experiences with professional development served as sensitizing concepts and influenced our data analysis. Additionally, one of us actually served on committees to develop LPDC documents.

Results

In this section, the individual stories of the six sites will be presented, followed by a cross-case analysis.

The Verde Area Schools Consortium

Verde is a small town, population 11,000. The average level of experience of teachers is 16.5 years and approximately 53% have earned master's degrees or more credits. The average income for the residents of Verde is $28,765 whereas the average teacher's salary is $35,000. The number of teachers in Verde is 245. As members of a consortium with five different schools, Verde and the consortium served as one of the state's pilot districts and qualified for a grant of $50,000. The most distinguishing characteristic that Verde's consortium created was a very specific chart which listed the IPDP options, values, verification procedures, and criteria for approval.

The Auckland City Schools

Auckland City Schools, population of 19,000, with a student enrollment of 4,060 is a small, industrialized city located 35 miles north of a metropolitan area. The average years of experience for the teachers of Auckland is 15.5 years while 67% have earned master's degrees of higher. While the average income of the residents is $33,600, the average teacher's salary is $39,975; there are approximately 193 teachers. Auckland's prime concern was the creation of clear and exact applications for IPDPs in which the teachers were to communicate their personal, building, or district goals as tied to their goals for student achievement. Anticipated bias on the part of the reviewers was addressed by removal of teacher names from the applications.

The Dearborn City Schools

The city of Dearborn has a population of 31,300 with 5,993 students. The average teacher in DCS has taught 16 years and 52% of the DCS teachers have earned master's degrees or higher. While the average income for DCS residents is $31,399, the average teacher salary is $39,200. The total number of teachers is approximately 241. While Dearborn was denied state funds to create their LPDC, a unique feature of Dearborn's document is the notion that a teacher may change goals over the five-year period of the IPDP. The committee created a revision form in order to alter the original IPDP.

The Target Schools

The Target City School district serves a community of 21,082 citizens. There are approximately 7,380 students as of 1998. There are 460 teachers in the system. The Target Schools' LPDC was one of the pilot school districts in the state thus they received state funds to create the document. Danielson's (1996) three phases of professional development: entry

level, experienced level, accomplished level were all imbedded into the IPDP process to foster a continuity of teacher evaluation methods and district goals.

The Median School District

The Median Schools serve a community with a student population of 5,765. There are 356 teachers in the district. The average teaching experience of the faculty is 9.9 years. The Median school district was part of the pilot project in the state to create a LPDC; thus the district received state funds for this work. A Steering Committee outlined the time frame and process methods for the creation of the LPDC. The LPDC Committee decided that each district school building (organized by grade levels) would have its own LPDC since the areas of expertise for each building required different reference points.

The Diversity School District

The Diversity Public School District (DPS) serves a school community with a population of 26,000. The average teacher in DPS has taught 15.3 years. The Diversity School district did not take part in the pilot project. The committee published three in-house documents for teachers, *Certificate Renewal and Licensure Information Packet* and *Certificate Renewal and Licensure Procedural Packet* and an *Update* to the aforementioned Procedural Packet with "revisions and/or clarifications." These documents outlined for teachers' the necessary steps for renewal, activities and credits awarded, common questions with answers, and the forms necessary for the application.

Cross-Case Analysis

The results will be presented based on the research questions as they pertain to the following themes: funding; committee structures; anticipated outcomes: reviewing of IPDPs; in-service programming; role of the university; relfection; reciprocity and appeal process;

benefits of LPDCs and a description of the variance that existed regarding the awarding of Professional Development Units (PDUs).

In the area of funding and financial resources, we found that while two of the districts received substantial funding for being pilot districts, only one applied for any of the grants that were publicized by the state; this left three districts that were left to attempt this undertaking with their own local funds. Of these three, one, Dearborn, had applied to the state to be considered part of a consortium but was denied. Four of the districts are not charging any fees. For one of the two that are charging, the fee is dependent upon whether or not the activity is district sponsored. The fee for both, at the minimum, is $5 while the one district charges $10 for non-district sponsored activities. The amount of compensation for committee members varied from being granted release time, to course reduction, and/or to annual compensations of $132 to $4,000 annually.

As explained by the key informants, the procedure for developing the actual document and putting the LPDC together was not an easy task. In all but one of the six sites, a majority of the people who were responsible for creating the document is also serving during the implementation phase as committee members. For one district, twelve of the original members did not continue to serve on the implementation committee. However, the membership of the implementation committee has remained unchanged over the last two years. The six sites varied in the composition of the groups they called their LPDCs. Median and Verde had committees that addressed what would eventually be the four new licensure levels. The other four and Median had district-level committees that ranged in size from five to sixteen in number. Team building was a common concern among three of the districts. Both DPS and Median made concerted efforts to engage staff in training that would facilitate

collegial relationships; Auckland used their document to highlight procedures for effective committee relations.

The sites varied in how they address the four anticipated outcomes that the state requires. Four districts explicitly state the required outcomes of students, self, building, and district on their IPDP forms. For the remaining two districts, Verde and Median, the message was implicit as to how teachers would meet the four outcomes through ancillary endeavors such as Continuous Improvement Plans or the Quality Teaching Model. How the districts interpreted the state's mandate to meet all four outcomes also varied. In one district, Auckland, teachers do not have to pick activities that meet all four goals concurrently but eventually, all four outcomes must be addressed within the plan. In other districts, the teachers must reflect on how their activity met all four levels of the anticipated outcomes.

The number of reviewed plans varied. One district planned not to review IPDPs for licensure until 2000; a second district would not review IPDPs until 2002. Both Median and Auckland were in the same range of reviewing a dozen IPDPs. While Verde had the most reviewed as they had looked at an estimated 50 - 75 plans. Verde and Auckland reported that teachers were submitting plans that constituted a mixture of activity options. The others reported that college credit was still the most dominant form of credit teachers were pursuing. Only one of the sites indicated that teachers had encountered any difficulty meeting the four outcome levels. In Target, they felt that the goals were difficult to meet because they were "top down" mandates that emanated from the Continuous Improvement Committee.

The six sites were fairly uniform in how they offered in-service credit to their teachers, and they did not think that would change. However, Median did not allow the

contractual days of in-service to be counted for credit toward IPDPs. Both Dearborn and Target have established a close working arrangement with a local university, which has provided many hours of accredited workshops for their teachers.

The most selfish question we, as university professors, could ask was for the sites to describe how they felt the university's role might fit into this new approach to PD. Four of the districts felt that the university's role would continue in the role of providing course work, which would move teachers up the pay scale. Two districts also believed that their partnership agreements with local universities would serve to promote a continuing role in their teachers' PD.

A key ingredient in any reform effort has been to encourage reflection on the part of the teachers as they engage in the change process. Each district requires teachers to keep logs of their hours and include descriptions of the ensuing activities. Similarly, each IPDP or any of the activity vouchers have sections, which require teachers to reflect on the worthiness of the activity. However, only two of the districts, Median and Verde, emphasize keeping a professional portfolio. Such portfolios inherently encourage reflection on the part of the teachers. All of the sites had the same policies on reciprocity and appeals. None of the districts had any issues to report. Auckland and Verde explained how instead of rejecting a plan, and running the risk of an appeal, they simply returned the plan with suggestions for improvement. Reciprocity was one concern voiced. The districts questioned if the quality of a plan for their own district would match ones from other districts through their reciprocity process. Others reasons for concern regarding the LPDCs are as follows: expensive; the burden of record keeping; and the lack of an operational definition of good professional development.

Four main reasons were given as to why LPDCs were an improvement versus past approaches to PD. All sites were convinced that such an approach to PD raised the level of professionalism for teachers. Allowing teachers to follow their own interests and create plans that match those interests was also thought to be a benefit. They also agreed that the new approach should have a more direct impact on student learning than past efforts might have. Two of the districts believed that the elimination of the permanent certificate was very appropriate.

As five of the six sites created a chart that identifies specific options that are available to teachers, we conducted an analysis of the types of activities that were suggested for professional development and the amount of credit teachers could receive for completing such activities. Table 1 provides the information gleaned from the analysis.

Table 1

Cross-Case Analysis of the Awarding of PD Units (PDUs)

PD OPTIONS	*DESCRIPTION OF VARIANCE
COLLEGE COURSE	all offer 3 PDUs per semester hour with no maximum
CONFERENCE	all award .1 PDU per clock hour
COOPERATING TEACHER	Dearborn, Median & Target: 6 per cycle Verde: 1 per quarter/cycle
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	Dearborn: 6/cycle; Median, Diversified,Verde:3/cycle
EDUCATIONAL PROJECT	Dearborn, Verde: 3/cycle; Diversity 6/cycle
GRANT WRITING	All granted a maximum of 6 PDUs per cycle
INSERVICE	all award .1 PDU per clock hour
MENTORING	Dearborn, Median & Target: 6 per cycle Verde: 3/yr.

(table continues)

PD OPTIONS	*DESCRIPTION OF VARIANCE
NBPTS	Dearborn: 12 PDUs/cycle for process; all 18 if certified, Median: 9 PDUs for process; all 18 if cert.; Diversity: 18 max Verde: 6 per cycle (no cert.)
PEER COACHING/ TEACHER LEADER	Target, Median, Diversity all award .1 PDU per clock hour
PEER OBSERVATION	Verde: pre-conference and post-conference summary Only Verde and Dearborn had this category
PORTFOLIO	Median allows up to 9 PDUs; Verde & Dearborn: 1/cycle
PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEES	Dearborn: 6/cycle; Median, Diversity,Verde:3/cycle
PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION	Median & Verde: only first time of presentation Diversity: twice for credit & level of presentation
PUBLISHED WORK	Diversified has subcategories and values based on categories- Verde and Dearborn: 6/book, 3/journal In all cases, the maximum award is 6 PDUs
SELF-DIRECTED DEV'T., RESEARCH, ED. TRAVEL	Dearborn: 6 per cycle, 3 per activity Verde: 3 per cycle, 1 per activity Median: 3 per cycle
TEACHING COLLEGE COURSE	Dearborn: 9 per cycle Verde: 3 (qtr) per year – first time only (if . . .15 max) Diversified: 6/cycle, can teach twice; Median : 6/cyle, first only
TEACHING VOC. ED. COURSE	Dearborn: 9 per cycle Verde: 3 (qtr) per year – first time only (if . . .15 max) Diversified: 6/cycle, can teach twice; Median : 6/cyle, first only
WORK EXPERIENCE/ EXTERNSHIPS	Dearborn & Verde: 12 for voc Ts; 6 for non-voc Ts 6 PDUs for Median
WORKSHOP	all award .1 PDU per clock hour

THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES EXISTED AT ONLY ONE SITE

PD OPTIONS	*DESCRIPTION OF VARIANCE
CHILD STUDY	Target
DISTANCE LEARNING	Target
DISTRICT-BASED COMMITTEE	Target
FIELD TRIPS FOR STUDENTS	Verde 3 PDUs (first time only)
SCHOOL-BASED IMPROVEMENT	Target

(table continues)

PD OPTIONS	*DESCRIPTION OF VARIANCE
SUPERVISION OF INTERN/	Dearborn is only one to address this category (8 PDUs/cycle-8/interns)
SUPERVISION OF OBSERVER	Dearborn is only one to address this category (3 PDUs/cycle)

- *Variance is based on differences in maximum CEUs awarded or in verification or criteria standards.*

***Auckland had elected not to complete any such chart with options and values of CEUs. A function of the LPDC is to evaluate, regardless of whether an activity fits into a named category, the appropriateness of the proposed PD activity. Similarly, while Target chose to list activities, they would indicate most of the CEU values as "variable."*

Note: Verde made a special option of field trips with students whereas in Dearborn, it would count under Educational Travel.

Discussion

In looking at the wide variety of professional development (PD) options that the school districts are attempting to provide, it appears that the Local Professional Development Committees (LPDCs) are very serious about trying to provide quality professional development. Secondly, they appear to understand the state's message that the Individual Professional. Development Plans (IPDPs) must reflect outcomes, which address four levels: students' needs, the teacher's needs, the goals of the building, and the goals of the district. Each of the six sites addressed the four outcomes either explicitly or implicitly; what is unclear, however, is whether each separate PD goal should address all four outcomes or whether goals can alternately meet one of the four goals as long as all four are eventually met by various IPDP goals.

Locally, the state allowed the local districts to determine if funding would be sought and how committees would be structured. The variation in remuneration ranged from $132 to $4,000 annually. Two of the sites chose to structure their committees by the four eventual

licensure types while another opted for a committee of 16 so that eventually, they might be broken into the four groups of four. State law, however, requires at least five total members on an LPDC (Ohio Department of Education, 1998, p. 9). These examples raise two interesting questions. Why didn't two of the six sites receive any funding? In order to facilitate a smooth transition from the certification status of teachers to licensure, why didn't the states require the LPDCs to reflect the four different licensure levels of Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Adolescent Young Adult, and Intervention Specialist?

While some had reviewed many IPDPs, others had looked at few or none. Regardless of this number, all could anticipate what we will call the burden of record keeping. While none of the districts thought the way they delivered in-service programs would change, they might consider using in-service days as opportunities for IPDP reviews. The missing pieces in this whole picture, we believe, are two related concepts: follow-up and reflection. Reflection is a part of the IPDPs at every site, yet the degree varies from simply writing a paragraph to including in-depth reflections through the portfolio process. Since one of the main problems with past PD activities has been a lack of follow-up (Guskey & Sparks, 1991), we would contend that this is still a potential problem and that in any effort to include a more intensive effort to ensure follow-up, this effort would also incorporate more than just a cursory, post-activity paragraph. Perhaps a software program could be developed which not only tracks the earning of PD units, such a program might also attempt to document teachers' efforts at both sustaining their IPDP goals and their reflections.

According to the participants in this study, the university's role in PD will be affected by the partnership relations it holds with the schools and by its willingness to communicate with school districts to determine the needs for teachers' PD. Quite selfishly we have begun

to open lines of communication with a study such as this. Thus, a question which arises is, How will the university's change to meet the needs of LPDCs?

In closing, it is exciting to see that all agreed that this new approach to professional development is one that might have lasting impact on both teachers and students. Never before have the individual teaching preferences of each educator been granted such notoriety and importance as in the case of the LPDCs. All of the key informants agreed that this is a step in the right direction. What remains to be seen is whether that step will be a limp or a strut.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

1) We are examining six districts' LPDC documents in this study. No two of them are the same, although all of the documents fulfill the state requirements. Would you please walk me through your document, telling me anything that you believe to be important, i.e. the people who put it together, evaluation criteria, existing committees. If you have any features that are unique to your district, please tell me about those and why they are in your document.
2) How do you feel about this new approach to professional development?
3) Now that your district is implementing this program, are some of the same people who created the program serving on committees or serving in any other capacity? Was it fairly easy to establish your committees? How are your committee members compensated?
4) The individual professional development plans are unique to each district. Roughly, how many have you reviewed as of this date? Are you collecting these plans as data in any special way? Do you have a database of the IPDPs?
5) When looking at the four areas of anticipated outcomes: student, self, building, and district have any issues evolved regarding teacher attempts to fulfill all four? Some documents have these four explicitly addressed, while others implicitly include questions to direct the teacher to speak to these issues. Why do you think there is such a variance in this area?

6) What is the basic structure of your LPDC – by district, building, area specialty (Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Adolescent Young Adult, Intervention Specialist)? What was your thinking on this format?

7) Recalling what you have examined to date on the IPDPs, what seems to be the major sources of credit for your teachers? University courses, activities, outside sources of professional development? What about the portfolios and inquiry pieces , have any teachers included these as means of obtaining credit? Do many include working with student teachers/interns? Mentoring?

8) In the past your district probably provided in-service training at which teachers could earn CEUs. Will this still operate in the same fashion or will you implement something else?

9) How do you see the role of the university in this scenario?

10) Have you had any dealings with the appeals process or granting reciprocity?

11) What are the requirements on written reflections? Do you require them? Where? Why?

12) Is there anything els you would like to tell me about, successes or challenges that we have not addressed yet?

Conclude: Thank you, etc. if you'd like, I'll provide a copy of the results of this study and that way, before our presentation, you'll have the opportunity to corroborate or refute anthing we have written.